

The Richard Townley House
1407 Morris Avenue
Union Township, Union County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-557

HABS
NJ
20-UNI
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

HABS
N.J.
20 UNI.
6-

The Richard Townley House
1407 Morris Avenue*
Union Township, Union County, New Jersey

Owner (and occupant): Richard R. Townley

Date of Erection: Minor unit about 1770; main unit
1815

Architect: Unknown

Builders: (1) Capt. Richard⁴ Townley (1736-1801)
and (2) his son Jonathan Townley (1766-
1827)

Present Condition: Original, well maintained

Number of Stories: Two and one-half, and cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry (main unit has
coursed ashlar above grade)

Exterior walls - timber frame, clapboarded
or shingled

Interior walls - lath and plaster on frame
studding

Chimneys - brick, built into inside of
gable end walls; fireplaces have modern
brick refacing

Roof - gambrel on main unit, gable on
minor unit, all (modern) wood shingled
(dormer modern)

Historical Data:

The identity of the original owner of this
notable example of Colonial and post-Revolutionary
domestic architecture in the vicinity of the old town.

*Other houses on Morris Ave. have been surveyed as follows:

NJ-192 The Jonathan Townley House, cor. Potter Ave.

NJ-535 The James Townley House, cor. Green Lane.

NJ-515 "Liberty Hall" the Gov. William Livingston House

of Elizabeth is established by search of title in the public records, reported as follows:

In his will dated 11 July 1801 and proved 27 August following, Richard⁴ Townley^(a) of the Borough of Elizabeth, Essex County, "being in the decline of life," bequeathed to his (eldest) son Jonathan Townley "the house and lot where I now live", describing the latter as bounded by a straight line from a walnut sapling near the road leading to John Stite's mill to an elm tree near the main road to Springfield (now Morris Ave.). Likewise to his son Jonathan he devised 40 acres of swamp meadow and the parcel of land "across the road". To his son Clark Townley he left the house and land where the said son Jonathan then lived, being some 50 or 60 acres, and a woodlot. The residue of the estate he bequeathed to his wife and daughters, and appointed his friend William Woodruff, son Jonathan Townley and son-in-law David Magie as executors.

(a) Richard⁴ Townley, Captain in First Regt. Essex County militia during the Revolution, was b. 22 or 27 Aug. 1736, d. 4 Aug. 1801 (gravestone* in First Presb. Chyd. Elizabeth), eldest son of Effingham² and Rebecca (Crane) Townley, grandson of Charles² Townley and grt. grandson of Col. Richard¹ Townley of Elizabethtown, N.J. He mar. 1st Rachel Carpenter and had issue: 1. James b. 29 June 1760, accidentally killed 1772; and 2. Rachel b. 12 Dec. 1763, d. 16 Nov. 1824, wf. of Henry Norris. He mar. 2nd Rhoda Clark who d. 21 July 1823 in 80th yr. and had issue: 3. Jonathan of whom further; 4. Phebe b. 20 Oct. 1768, m. David Magie; 5. Clark b. 26 Nov. 1770; 6. Rebecca b. 22 May 1772, m. Benj. Haines; 7. Rhoda b. 12 Apr. 1774, d. 1776; 8. Sarah B. 26 Oct. 1776, m. Wm. Crane; and 9 Elizabeth b. 22 Aug. 1780, m. Jonathan M. Mecker. (D.A.R. Lineage Books 89-255 and 113-40. John Littell, First Settlers of Passaic Valley, 1852, pp. 434, etc.)

* Inscriptions ----- in the Burial Grounds of the First Pros. Ch. and St. John's Ch. at Elizabeth, N.J., 1664-1892, page 192.

Jonathan⁵ Townley(b) eldest son and devisee of Richard Townley as abovesaid, apparently moved into the paternal homestead (here considered) upon the death of his father in 1801. Evidently, he erected the main unit of the present house about 1815 (as its details indicate) as an addition to the original house and inserted the large windows of the first story of the latter to replace smaller ones. By a deed of 4 March 1818, he conveyed it for \$2857 to (his son) Richard Townley, both being of Union Township* describing the land as "formerly owned by Richard Townley, deceased" and as being some 52½ acres fronting on the northeast side of the Morris Turnpike road (now Morris Ave.). Jonathan Townley was then (or at the date of his will, 1827) living in the house which we have surveyed as NJ-192, on the same side of Morris Avenue.

Richard⁶ Townley(c) the grantee who thus came into possession of the paternal homestead in 1818, evidently occupied the house thereafter, being still at Union Township at the date of

(b) Jonathan⁵ Townley, b. 13 Oct. 1766, d. 29 Sept. 1827, gravestone in First Presby. Chyd., Elizabeth, eld. son of Richard Townley and his second wife Rhoda Clark. He mar. 11 Dec. 1787 Phebe Magie, who d. 25 Jan. 1837 in 70th yr., and had issue: 1. Richard, of whom further; 2. Jonathan Jr. who m. Rhoda Magie and d.s.p.; 3. Phebe m. Col. Wm. Brown; 4. Mary m. Sam'l. Pierson; 5. John m. Eveline Nutman; and 6. Rebecca m. Ichabod Ogdon. (Littell, cited above).

*Union Twp. created 1808 from Elizabethtown, was included in the new County of Union in the division of Essex Co. 1857.

(c) Richard⁶ Townley, son of Jonathan and Phebe (Magie) Townley abovessaid, mar. Hannah Wade, dau. of Jonas Wade Esq. of Springfield, and had issue: 1. Robert, 2. Jonas Wade, 3. Phebe O. m. Henry Meeker, 4. Harriet m. Alex. Ball; 5. James, and 6. Richard who d. 1848 aged 16 yrs. Of these sons, Robert, Jonas and James became merchants in Fort Wayne, Indiana, but Jonas returned to Elizabeth, New Jersey. (Littell, cited above).

his will, 15 March 1861, which was proved 8 March 1864. He devised to his son Jonas Townley "my homestead house and lot of land comprising my garden and out yards, with all the buildings..... and the orchard on the northerly side thereof, in all about 20 acres lying in one body." After making bequests to his other heirs, testator appointed his sons Robert W. and Jonas W. Townley as executors.

By deed of 20 April 1864, Robert⁷ Townley, a son and executor of Richard Townley last abovenamed, conveyed to James B. Burnet of the City of Elizabeth, five tracts of land, three of which were "part of the homestead farm whereon the said Richard Townley formerly lived." Burnet and wife passed the title of the same tracts to Jonas W.⁷ Townley (2nd son of Richard⁶) on 2 May 1864 in consideration of \$4936.20.

Jonas Wade⁷ Townley last named, who thus obtained the homestead on Morris Avenue, was residing on a 4 acre lot at the corner of Broad Street and Salem Avenue on 2 February 1889, the date of his will (proved 26 March 1897) in which he devises that house and lot to his wife and son Jonas Mortimer Townley as tenants in common. To the son he also devised the several tracts obtained by the deed from James B. Burnet cited above, being the homestead farm on Morris Avenue outside the city limits, in Union Township, on which stood the house here considered.

Jonas Mortimer⁸ Townley, son and devisee abovenamed, held the property until 28 July 1926, on which date he and his wife Helen N., being of the city of Elizabeth, conveyed to Richard Townley of same place, the homestead in Union Township as developed into "Townley Manor", being on a lot having a 325 foot frontage on the northeast side of Morris Avenue and 300 foot on the northwest side of Lorraine Avenue. This grantee remains as owner and occupant at the time of our survey of the house.

Bibliography:

Report by Thomas J. Riley, H.A.B.S.
abstractor, on search of title in
Land and Probato records of Essex
County, received 15 April 1940

Lucy S. Cook
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer

TW 11/1/40